

## FIVE-MINUTE SERMON

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE CHOSEN FIVE

"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables: that seeing, they may not see, and hearing, they may not understand." (St. Luke, viii, 9)

These are very important words which we should lay deeply to heart. Their meaning opens out the more we study them, and we would do well to spend a little time in finding out whether we come under the condemnation or not. Let me try to assist you in your examination.

Our Lord was a personage that was constantly surrounded by crowds of men and women who were impelled towards Him by many and various motives. His fame had spread throughout the country, and He was regarded by all as a great man; but all were not equally impressed as to the kind and extent of His greatness. Hence it was that some came out of pure curiosity, some to receive a favor, while a few we may believe were led to Him by a desire to learn from His lips a higher doctrine than any they had hitherto been taught.

Now, with such a motley gathering always around Him, our Lord could not but speak cautiously on subjects so new and difficult to be understood by His hearers. He was only carrying out His own command, "Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine." Our Lord in thus acting only did what was reasonable as well as merciful. He acted reasonably in that it would have been the height of folly for Him to use words above the native understanding of the majority, who would estimate His teaching as the babbling of one not wholly in his mind. He acted mercifully because he thereby freed them from the penalty attached to the non-fulfillment of their duty learned in these discourses; for not plainly being brought to account for any neglect in its carrying out. Our Lord says, "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables." Here we have the antithesis "you" and "rest." The "you" refers directly to the Apostles, and indirectly to all who are in the same condition of mind and heart as theirs. The "rest" are to be understood those who are either antagonistic to the divine word, or who are too steeped in sin and ignorance of anything nobler than pondering the wants of the body and the demands of the passions, to be prepared to receive the revelation that God makes of Himself and of our obligations to Him. Yes, brethren, the heart and the intellect must be in a suitable condition before we may expect to benefit from anything that God makes known regarding Himself or ourselves.

Man of his own natural powers cannot effect anything. In order for us to rise to the supernatural, we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to fill our minds with supernatural thought and desires, and with our individual co-operation to accomplish in us whatever God has designed for all eternity. The Apostle St. James tells us that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above," and surely there can be no more true and perfect gift than the divine word, the word of God. This is the reason why the vast mass of mankind in general, and Christians in particular, seem to have so little concern with the things pertaining to the soul. They seldom or never hear the voice of God or conscience, instilling the divine word, means of salvation, or illuminating their minds for a clearer and larger grasp of the truths of our holy faith. They always appear to be stupid and indifferent on any subject not having a direct reference to the things of this life. This, brethren, betrays a sickly state of our spiritual nature. We who are born again by the waters of regeneration and nourished by the other sacraments of the Catholic Church, and possessing so many helps for attaining to a high degree of sanctity, should, if we use them rightly and persistently, rise day by day to a clearer and fuller perception of the divine mysteries, till we come after death to the perfect and complete vision of God in Paradise. There is no excuse for us. If we do not co-operate with the grace of God, then we shall share the lot of those of whom it is said, "But he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath."

## REPEATING CONFESSIONS

A MISSIONARY SERMONETTE FOR SCRUPULOUS PENITENTS

Rev. T. W. Drum in the Apostolate.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (I. John i, 9)

My dear Christians, if you did me the honor of reading my last sermonette on the process of making an ordinary confession, you probably have a shower of questions to pour at me now. You don't need to. I have been asked them dozens of times on the mission. That shows that they are of such practical interest as to demand a satisfactory answer.

Here I am going to talk to you about repeating confessions, and particularly about those repetitions that are useless and injurious. (Next time about those that are useful and necessary.) I am speaking now to those poor penitents who are never certain, always doubting, always questioning, fearful, worried, superstitious, scrupulous. For these I put the whole sermonette in two words and say to them: Never repeat your confessions.

Please remember that I have already laid down all the fundamentals of every good confession; that is making each confession the best possible, and that anybody in any confession may repeat profitably any big sin, even though it has been confessed many times before. I wish that were established as a standard there would be no repeating confessions, and no need of any.

But to the questions. One will ask to make a general confession, and will give as a reason: "Because I am not sure that my confessions were good," and

## Chilblains So Bad He Couldn't Wear Boots

Douglas' Egyptian Liniment Cured Him

Though thousands suffer from chilblains every winter, few are laid up with them as was Mr. J. A. McFarlane, of Napanee, Ont. What cured him will surely cure anything in the way of chilblains.

Mr. McFarlane writes: "Douglas' Egyptian Liniment cured me of chilblains. My case was so bad that at times I was confined to the house, the affected parts being so sore and festered that I was unable to wear boots. Many remedies were tried without benefit, until I procured Egyptian Liniment, which gave immediate relief. Whenever I feel symptoms of this trouble returning, one application of the Liniment is sufficient to check it. It is wise to keep a bottle of Egyptian Liniment always on hand, ready for immediate use when needed. In the case of frost bites, burns or scalds, it gives instant relief."

25c. at all Druggists. Free sample on request. Douglas & Co., Napanee, Ont.

other, "because I don't think I had the right kind of sorrow," another, "because I'm in doubt that I committed such and such a sin, or that I told it, just right, or that the priest knew what I meant, or that it was a mortal sin," another, "because I forgot to confess a sin I committed a long time ago," another, "because I committed a sin when a child that I didn't think of till lately," or "I didn't think it was wrong till this mission," another, "because, though I know I have confessed my sins and they are forgiven, yet they keep coming up all the time, they bother me so, and if I tell them again I may get rid of them," another, "because I didn't tell everything; because the confessor wouldn't give me time; he wouldn't let me explain; he sent me to communion when I wasn't fit to go, and so I did not go; he did not understand my case; I'm a great sinner, and he thought me scrupulous; I'm not."

These are samples of the excuses people offer for making general confessions. Some are constantly teasing to repeat their past confessions, and if one confessor won't let them they'll go to another and another. In fact, they sometimes repeat the same sins over and over again, and they are not bound to repeat. Small sins, details and general confessions need never be repeated. Worried, nervous, and scrupulous souls—never repeat anything.

These principles ought to satisfy all the souls to whom I speak here. If you are "not sure" that your confessions were good, it is likely they were. If you "don't think" you had right sorrow, it's most likely you did have. Be assured that the priest knew what you meant, or he would ask questions. If you can't swear you meant to deceive him, you need not repeat confessions. Don't imagine he "didn't understand your case;" that is his affair, not yours. If you don't know a sin is big or little, tell it once just as it appears. If you committed a "venial" sin, tell that sin now, once for all. If it did not seem so bad till this mission, tell it at its worst now. If you have "forgotten a sin," tell that sin; don't repeat others. Repeating your confessions won't keep your sins from "coming up all the time." They "bother" you so, that is the penalty of having committed sin. That should be a warning to others to keep from sin that will "bother" later. You can "get rid of them" by gliding them over with devotion and prayer. Mortify yourself, fast, visit the sick and the poor, give charity cheerfully.

A last word, then, to these souls: Make your ordinary confessions always as good as you know how. That is the rule. Never repeat them unless on the advice of your confessor. Put your case before him once for all, and abide by his instruction and never refer to it again.

Now, a word to the poor scrupulous and the near-scrupulous. Poor things! They are the most piteous penitents with whom we have to deal. They are always anxious about the past, always questioning, always going into ridiculous details, always repeating, and nearly always dissatisfied. They want to make a general confession every time they go, and if you let them, they will go every day and every hour in the day, and even then it is hard to get them to go to Holy Communion. They worry about nothing in the past, and overlook the sins of to-day, and these are often worse than those of the past. Their want of confidence and their disobedience now is worse than anything else they do or did.

A scrupulous conscience and a delicate conscience do not mean the same thing at all. Sometimes a near-scrupulous person imagines that his scruples are an indication of delicacy on the point of sinning. A delicate conscience fears real sin and wants to avoid it; a scrupulous person imagines there is sin where there is no sin at all. I am reminded of a pony I used to have. He was nervous, shied at every shadow and worked himself into awful excitement, fretted and sweated till he was good for nothing. Now, there was no need of that at all; all shadows, fancies, nothing. Just so with the scrupulous; they fret and stew over endless notions.

These poor souls begin by imagining that everything they do, even good actions, are sins, great and small, and they figure these up in annoying numbers and extraordinary phrases. Then they lose all interest in prayer, stay away from the sacraments, grow disobedient, stubborn and desperate, and end in becoming wild-eyed, wandering skeletons, maniacs or in the horrid throes of despair and despondency.

Poor things! Let us help or save them if we can by kind advice. If your confessor ever tells you you are scrupulous or getting scrupulous, prick up your ears right away and believe him instantly. It's a warning. Don't go to one confessor after another; don't go to two; go to the same one always. If ever you made a general confession, make another and then die; just one. Don't ever repeat anything that you ever told in confession; once said and quit. In your ordinary duties, banish scruples as you would any other bad thought. Don't on any account dally with details or particular phases of sin. Keep the mind well occupied with bright, cheerful thoughts and meditations. Don't talk of your scruples or let anybody talk to you about them.

Put absolute confidence in your confessor, following his advice blindly. Let nothing tempt you to change or to disobey him who will lead you safe. Pray plenty; trust in God, who is our Father in heaven, our best mother. Rejoice that God is so good, Christ so kind and full of mercy. Open up your heart and fill it with confidence, joy, calm, peace and cheerfulness.

The other day I received a letter from Sister Thomas in which she relates an incident that will prove very instructive here, so I take the liberty to insert it.

A dear, good, pious old lady, was listening to a discussion on the merits of general confessions; and she had advocated repeating them often. The dear old saint spoke up rather warmly: "What! I'd want to make a liar of God. Didn't He say that if we confess our sins once with sorrow and all for given, and they rejoice in their success and turn the trick again at the first opportunity—like the old lady who went around thanking God and her own smartness, after the mission, that she made 'two general confessions to one of the holy fathers and one to the other.'"

Now listen. Confessions once honestly made need never be repeated. Repeating confessions means looking backward, to the neglect of the future. Good souls are often worried and troubled by the sins of the past. If you are not dead certain of having made a bad confession, don't repeat. In doubt about sin or confession or sorrow, you are not bound to repeat. Small sins, details and general confessions need never be repeated. Worried, nervous, and scrupulous souls—never repeat anything.

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Now listen. Confessions once honestly made need never be repeated. Repeating confessions means looking backward, to the neglect of the future. Good souls are often worried and troubled by the sins of the past. If you are not dead certain of having made a bad confession, don't repeat. In doubt about sin or confession or sorrow, you are not bound to repeat. Small sins, details and general confessions need never be repeated. Worried, nervous, and scrupulous souls—never repeat anything.

These principles ought to satisfy all the souls to whom I speak here. If you are "not sure" that your confessions were good, it is likely they were. If you "don't think" you had right sorrow, it's most likely you did have. Be assured that the priest knew what you meant, or he would ask questions. If you can't swear you meant to deceive him, you need not repeat confessions. Don't imagine he "didn't understand your case;" that is his affair, not yours. If you don't know a sin is big or little, tell it once just as it appears. If you committed a "venial" sin, tell that sin now, once for all. If it did not seem so bad till this mission, tell it at its worst now. If you have "forgotten a sin," tell that sin; don't repeat others. Repeating your confessions won't keep your sins from "coming up all the time." They "bother" you so, that is the penalty of having committed sin. That should be a warning to others to keep from sin that will "bother" later. You can "get rid of them" by gliding them over with devotion and prayer. Mortify yourself, fast, visit the sick and the poor, give charity cheerfully.

A last word, then, to these souls: Make your ordinary confessions always as good as you know how. That is the rule. Never repeat them unless on the advice of your confessor. Put your case before him once for all, and abide by his instruction and never refer to it again.

Now, a word to the poor scrupulous and the near-scrupulous. Poor things! They are the most piteous penitents with whom we have to deal. They are always anxious about the past, always questioning, always going into ridiculous details, always repeating, and nearly always dissatisfied. They want to make a general confession every time they go, and if you let them, they will go every day and every hour in the day, and even then it is hard to get them to go to Holy Communion. They worry about nothing in the past, and overlook the sins of to-day, and these are often worse than those of the past. Their want of confidence and their disobedience now is worse than anything else they do or did.

A scrupulous conscience and a delicate conscience do not mean the same thing at all. Sometimes a near-scrupulous person imagines that his scruples are an indication of delicacy on the point of sinning. A delicate conscience fears real sin and wants to avoid it; a scrupulous person imagines there is sin where there is no sin at all. I am reminded of a pony I used to have. He was nervous, shied at every shadow and worked himself into awful excitement, fretted and sweated till he was good for nothing. Now, there was no need of that at all; all shadows, fancies, nothing. Just so with the scrupulous; they fret and stew over endless notions.

These poor souls begin by imagining that everything they do, even good actions, are sins, great and small, and they figure these up in annoying numbers and extraordinary phrases. Then they lose all interest in prayer, stay away from the sacraments, grow disobedient, stubborn and desperate, and end in becoming wild-eyed, wandering skeletons, maniacs or in the horrid throes of despair and despondency.

Poor things! Let us help or save them if we can by kind advice. If your confessor ever tells you you are scrupulous or getting scrupulous, prick up your ears right away and believe him instantly. It's a warning. Don't go to one confessor after another; don't go to two; go to the same one always. If ever you made a general confession, make another and then die; just one. Don't ever repeat anything that you ever told in confession; once said and quit. In your ordinary duties, banish scruples as you would any other bad thought. Don't on any account dally with details or particular phases of sin. Keep the mind well occupied with bright, cheerful thoughts and meditations. Don't talk of your scruples or let anybody talk to you about them.

Put absolute confidence in your confessor, following his advice blindly. Let nothing tempt you to change or to disobey him who will lead you safe. Pray plenty; trust in God, who is our Father in heaven, our best mother. Rejoice that God is so good, Christ so kind and full of mercy. Open up your heart and fill it with confidence, joy, calm, peace and cheerfulness.

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